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ENGL 015

Assignment 2

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Audience: adults

Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice

Fuck. Of all the words in the English language, this one takes the cake. This word, alongside others like abortion and marijuana, is packed full of controversy. There are people out there who file lawsuits based on language. Look at Howard Stern, for example. You risk losing your job just for using words that people long before you made up. Anywhere you go there are users, abusers, and naysayers of any and all cuss words. The users think that swear words add dynamic to a thought. Abusers use cuss words to fill in the gaps between every other word or so. The naysayers, however, will tell you that vulgarity has no place in society. I know, however, that any word which has a place in Webster’s Dictionary has a place in this world.

I grew up in a small rural community. My graduating class consisted of just under 150 students, half of which were going to pursue fields – literally. It may be a slight exaggeration, but I would say about half the people in my school either lived on a farm, worked on a farm, or lived within a mile of one. Most of the boys in my class carried cans of chewing tobacco during school; most of the girls sported the boots, plaid, and pig-tail look. In short, my hometown was made up of a bunch of hicks. As they are typically depicted, hicks are ranked second to sailors when it comes to dirty mouths. This holds true for Juniata County- my home town. Walking down the street, through the grocery aisles, or even through the hallways of elementary schools, you could hear a “bad” word every now and then. You may think that it’s astounding to have elementary age students swearing, but according to my grandmother, I was only one when I first used the word *fuck.*

“Fok. Fok. Fok!” I shouted from my highchair.

While sitting at the dining room table, amidst heavy conversation, my grandmother stops cold at my words. She turns to my mom, her eyes piercing right through my mother’s skull. My grandmother would be among the naysayers of this world. You might occasionally hear a slip of the tongue every now and again, but she sticks to her main substitutes – sugar and fudge. My mother, on the other hand, doesn’t have the cleanest of mouths. She’s a true believer in using every word that’s out there. If I would have to classify her, I would put her in the abuser category.

“Mom, she’s saying *fork*,” my mother assured her.

But it wouldn’t have been far off for me to have been saying *fuck* from the beginning. That’s the type of household I grew up in – one that taught me as much as I could possibly learn. Leaving all opportunities open, leaving no doors shut. I was well aware, thanks to my grandmother, that these words are only to be used in certain situations, for certain people. This became apparent when I accidently squealed out a “mother fucker” during lunch one day in the 3rd grade. Back then, it was impressive to know swear words. It was even more impressive to use them. Surprisingly, though, no one really cared if you knew what any of the words meant. For all we knew, *shit* could have meant *lollipop*. Either way, I got spanked when I returned home from school that day, and my grandmother sat me down, along with my mother, to have a talk.

At first, I was angry. Why couldn’t I use the word? Why were other people allowed to when I couldn’t? What made them so special anyways?

“Well,” I was told, “some people just don’t like it.”

And to that I said, “*Fuck* them.”

No one had ever told me what I was allowed to talk about or allowed to say, and I wasn’t going to let it start then. Saying it empowered me. It made me more confident and more mature in some eyes. It gave what I said meaning, it gave it feeling. The emotions packed behind just this one, four lettered word could make a mime cry out in anguish. Any sentence, with this word added to it, would become so much more than what it was without it.

Take for example, the sentence, “I love you.” Just this sentence alone is powerful. But when you add in the extra word, it becomes “I *fuckin* love you.” Here, it’s like saying that you really, truly, deeply love this person. It’s what someone could say when *love* just isn’t enough. When *love* can’t express how you truly feel, you add a word with deep emotion to get your point across in an even stronger way.

Another example would be, “What the fuck is this?” When said this way, you can feel the anger. You can sense the deep hatred behind the words. Instead, it would just read “What is this?” When reading this alone, you might just think someone is confused or curious. It doesn’t give the extra zest to let the reader know just how the person feels.

Lastly, look at the statement, “I don’t give a fuck.” If an individual walked up to me and said that they just saw Bob Saget, I would politely reply, “I don’t care.” However, if an individual came up to me screaming that they just saw Justin Beiber walking down the street, I’d say “I don’t give a fuck!” This is not only due to the fact that I despise his high-pitched girly voice, but frankly because I’d be annoyed knowing he was anywhere within 100 miles of me. If I said that I plain didn’t care, it wouldn’t convey the true disgust I feel.

You see, *fuck* isn’t a swear word. Sure, it’s a four-letter word, but so are *love* and *dirt*. Those words are not considered profane, though. Then there’s also swear words like *ass* and *bitch.* These aren’t necessarily cuss words, though, because they are functional words used to refer to real things: your behind and a female dog. People try to put these words into a general category, when really, they’re all different. All the “swear” words are used for different purposes, meant to mean different things. So why would we not use them? Cuss words give a sentence power. They take each statement’s potential and raise it to the extreme. Instead, these words should be called “power” words, because that’s what they truly are. They shouldn’t be known for being offending, they should be known for being compelling. Forget what you’ve been told. From this day forward, “swear” words, no longer exist.

Thus, because *fuck* actually serves a purpose, it can’t be a swear word; in fact, it’s more like a spice. Just as a spice can add unique compliments to a dish, *fuck* adds its own flavor to any given sentence. Sugar and fudge, zest, taking the cake – all of these words are used when describing *fuck* as a functional word. You may be confused by this, but if you think about it, it’s perfectly logical. *Fuck* is the spice you add to your meal to keep it from being bland. It’s the secret ingredient you add to set it apart from all the other generic products. It’s the term you use when you really feel something behind the words you speak.

So maybe when I was little and my grandmother thought I was swearing, or my mom thought I was saying *fork*, what I was really asking for was the salt and pepper. “Please pass the *fuck*.”